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Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENNA 0594

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, AU, YO
SUBJ: LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN SLOVENE MINORITY CONTROVERSY

REF: A. BELGRADE 0237
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SUMMARY: AUSTRIAN MFA SHARES VIEWS OF ITS AMBASSADOR IN BELGRADE REGARDING NUMBER OF RECENT ENCOURAGING SIGNS RE SLOVENIAN MINORITY CONTROVERSY AND HAS ALSO CITED ADDITIONAL ONE. AT SAME TIME, HOWEVER, ELECTION CAMPAIGN IN CARINTHIA IS HEATING UP AS SOCIALISTS, ENGAGED IN STRUGGLE TO HOLD THEIR PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY, TURN SHARPLY TO RIGHT. SLOVENE MINORITY CONTROVERSY HAS BECOME CENTRAL ISSUE IN CAMPAIGN WITH RESULT THAT PARTIES ARE BATTLING OVER WHICH ONE IS BETTER ABLE IN EFFECT TO PUT DOWN SLOVENE MINORITY. GOA MAY GET DIALOGUE GOING AGAIN WITH YUGOSLAVS ON "CULTURAL PROPERTIES" ISSUE BUT IS LIKELY TO REMAIN IMMOBILIZED FOR MOST OF 1975 ON KEY ISSUES IN CONTROVERSY IN VIEW OF CARINTHIAN AND NATIONAL ELECTIONS LATER THIS YEAR. END SUMMARY

1. AUSTRIAN MFA MINISTER TARTER, WHO HANDLES RELATIONS WITH COMMUNIST COUNTRIES, PLAYED BACK TO US AMBASSADOR CONFIDENTIAL

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OTTO'S LATEST EFFORTS, AS REPORTED REFTEL A, TO DE-

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ESCALATE AUSTRIAN-YUGOSLAV CONFLICT OVER SLOVENE MINORITY ISSUE. AUSTRIANS HAVE READ LATEST YUGOSLAV NOTE (DEC. 27) ON SUBJECT AS REFLECTING YUGOSLAV DESIRE TO RING DOWN CURTAIN ON FIRST ACT OF DRAMA AND SEEK NEW SCENARIO FOR NEXT ACT. YUGOSLAV EMBASSY HERE HAS INDICATED YUGOSLAVS DO NOT EXPECT REPLY TO THEIR LATEST NOTE AND FEEL THAT ANY NEW INITIATIVE ON SUBJECT MUST COME FORM AUSTRIANS. IN LATTER CONNECTIONS, TARTER STATED FONOFF WAS PUTTING TOGETHER SOME NEW PROPOSALS ON THE QUESTION OF RETURN OF "CULTURAL PROPERTIES," PURPOSE OF WHICH WOULD BE TO GET DIALOGUE GOING AGAIN WITH YUGOSLAVS ON LESS SENSITIVE, MORE EASILY RESOLVED ISSUE.

2. TARTER ALSO NOTED AND FOUND ENCOURAGING TAPERING OFF IN INTENSITY OF YUGOSLAV PRESS ATTACKED AGAINST AUSTRIA (PARA 4 REFTEL A). IN ADDITION, HE FELT WILLINGNESS OF TWO SLOVENIAN ORGANIZATIONS IN CARINTHIA, AFTER EARLIER WALKOUT, TO RESUME WORK WITH AUSTRIAN GOVERNMENTAL OFFICIALS IN CONTACT BODIES REPRESENTED ANOTHER HELPFUL DEVELOPMENT. SLOVENIAN ORGANIZATIONS IN QUESTION HAVE OFFERED TO PARTICIPATE BUT ONLY ON CONDITION THAT CONSIDERATIONS OF "SPECIAL MINORITY CENSUS" BE DROPPED. TARTER CHOSE TO OVERLOOK LATTER STIPULATION WHICH CLEARLY CRUX OF ENTIRE CONTROVERSY.

3. IN CONTRAST TO FOREGOING MODEST ENCOURAGING SIGNS, INCREASINGLY BITTER CARINTHIAN ELECTION CAMPAIGN WHICH TERMINATES AT POLLS ON MARCH 2 SEEMS TO ASSURE CONTINUING POLEMICS ACROSS BORDERS BETWEEN CARINTHIA AND SLOVENIA. INCUMBENT SOCIALIST GOVERNOR WAGNER, WHO SUCCEEDED TO POSITION AFTER PARTY OUSTER OF PREDECESSOR SIMA IN WAKE OF BILINGUAL ROADSIGN IMBROGLIO

OF 1972, IS ENGAGED IN MAJOR DEFENSIVE BATTLE TO HANG ON TO SOCIALIST MAJORITY IN PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY. INITIALLY WAGNER TRIED TO SIDE-STEP ISSUE BY CALLING FOR AGREEMENT OF ALL THREE PARTIES IN PROVINCIAL PARLIAMENT TO KEEP SLOVENE MINORITY ISSUE OUT OF CAMPAIGN AND TO MAINTAIN POLITICAL SOLIDARITY ON ISSUE. OPPOSITION CONFIDENTIAL

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PEOPLE'S PARTY LEADERSHIP, IN TACTICAL MOVE TO EMBARRASS SOCIALISTS, HAS CALLED ON GOA TO ADOPT NEW LAW THIS SPRING, SETTING OUT PROCEDURES FOR SPECIAL MINORITY CENSUS IN CARINTHIA, SO THAT SAME COULD BE CONDUCTED IN 1976.

4. OBSERVERS NOW AGREE SLOVENE MINORITY CONTROVERSY HAS BECOME MOST IMPORTANTCAMPAIGN ISSUE IN CARINTHIA

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AND THAT IN VIEW THEREOF, ALL THREE PARTIES ARE TRYING TO OUTDO ONE ANOTHER IN STRIDENCY OF THEIR DEFENSE OF AUSTRO-GERMAN NATIONAL INTERESTS VIS-A-VIS SLOVENE MINORITY. WAGNER HIMSELF HAS GONE SO FAR AS TO SUGGEST THAT HAVING BEEN "EXEMPLARY MEMBER OF HITLER YOUTH," HE IS BEST CANDIDATE TO LOOK AFTER CARINTHIAN INTERESTS.

5. POLITICAL TENSIONS IN CARINTHIA HAVE BEEN FURTHER EXACERBATED BY DECISION OF SLOVENE MINORITY LEADERSHIP TO RUN FOR FIRST TIME SEPARATE SLOVENE ELECTION TICKET. THIS DECISION HAS SOMEWHAT COMPLICATED TACTICS OF SOCIALISTS WHO IN PAST HAVE BEEN MAIN BENEFICIARY OF MINORITY VOTE. WAGNER, IN TURN, HAS THREATENED EXPULSION FROM PARTY OF ANY SOCIALIST FUNCTIONARY WHO APPEARS ON "SLOVENE UNITY LIST."

6. WITH EXCEPTION OF MFA MOVE ON "CULTURAL PROPERTIES," (WHICH INCIDENTALLY NOT GERMANE TO SLOVENE MINORITY CONTROVERSY) WE HAVE HEARD NOTHING ABOUT POSSIBLE NEW INITIATIVES GOA MAY BE PLANNING RE ARTICLE 7 ISSUES IN NEAR FUTURE AND GIVEN NATURE OF CURRENT AUSTRIAN DOMESTIC POLITICAL SITUATION WE DO NOT ANTICIPATE ANY. AUSTRIAN AND CARINTHIAN GOVERNMENTS HAVE ANNOUNCED PREPARATION OF "WHITE BOOKS" ON SLOVENIAN MINORITY CONTROVERSY; HOWEVER, BOOKS REPORTEDLY WILL BE ONE YEAR IN PREPARATION, THUS ASSURING THEIR NON-AVAILABILITY IN CONNECTION WITH CARINTHIAN AND NATIONAL ELECTIONS THIS YEAR. SLOVENIAN MINORITY IS ALREADY DISTRIBUTING IS "RED BOOK" WHICH MAKES CASE WITH MAPS AND STATISTICS THAT AUSTRO-GERMANS HAVE HISTORICALLY FOLLOWED POLICY OF ASSIMILATION VIS-A-VIS SLOVENE MINORITY AND, MORE RECENTLY, HAVE FAILED TO OBSERVE ARTICLE 7 OF STATE TREATY.

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7. ON BASIS OUR LATEST REVIEW OF DEVELOPMENTS IN CONNECTION WITH CONTROVERSY AND OF AUSTRIAN DOMESTIC POLITICAL SCENE, WE CONCLUDE THAT GOA WILL MAKE SERIOUS EFFORT TO TALK ACCOMMODATION WITH YUGOSLAVS ON LESS SENSITIVE ISSUES. HOWEVER, IN VIEW OF UPCOMING CARINTHIAN AND NATIONAL ELECTIONS, WHICH PROMISE TO BE HOTLY CONTESTED, GOA LIKELY TO REMAIN IMMOBILIZED ON KEY ISSUES OF BILINGUAL ROAD SIGNS AND"SPECIAL MINORITY CENSUS" FOR MOST OF 1975. HUMES

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